

Rennan's View of Christianity

From many points of view, assuredly, the Christians were loyal subjects. They never revolted, nor were they accustomed to pray for their persecutors. In the case of the emperor against Marcus Aurelius, they took no part in the revolt of Avidius Cassius. They professed principles of the most absolute legitimism. God giving earthly power to whom it pleaseth him, men must obey, without examination, and without exception, the laws of the reigning political orthodoxy was, at bottom, only the worship of success. "There was never found among us a partisan of Albinius, or a partisan of Niger," says Tertullian ostentatiously, in the reign of Septimius Severus. But, as a matter of truth, wherein was

It was the rich man who, along the whole line, was sacrificed. Few rich men entered the Church, and their position in it was extremely difficult. The poor, proud of the Gospel promise, treated them in a way that might seem arrogant. The rich man had to persuade men to give up their riches, as if they were something derogatory to the dignity of Christianity. As a matter of right the Kingdom of God was barred against him, unless he purified his wealth by almsgiving, or expiated it by martyrdom. He was regarded as an egotist who grew fat upon the sweat of others. The community of goods, indeed, if it had ever existed, existed no longer. What was called the apostolic mode of life, that is to say the ideal of the primitive Church, was a far from a dream projected in a far distant past, but a real individual ownership exercised by one of the faithful was but a semi-ownership; to him it was of small account, and the Church, in reality, had as large a share in it as he.

slave. In the same terms that the pagans used to describe John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, is also the most the only doctor who explicitly recommends to his men to master the manumission of his slave as a good action. At a later date the Church owned slaves, and treated them as everybody else did, that is to say as property, enough to the condition of the slave of the Church was everywhere varied by one circumstance, to wit, the impossibility of alienating the property of the Church. Who was his owner? Who had the competence to free him? The difficulty of solving this question prolonged ecclesiastical servitude and brought about this curious result, that the Church, which in reality has done more for the slave, was least to own slaves. The freedom of the slave was a matter of will by will. Now, the Church had no will to make. Even the ecclesiastical freedman had for his patron a mistress who never died.

It was in an indirect and infernal way that

It came to pass that a religion framed for the inward consolation of a very small number of the elect became, by an unheeded stroke of fortune, the religion of millions, composing the most active portion of mankind. It is precipitantly in victories of a religion, or that it is right to say that the conqueror give laws to the conquered. The multitude as they thronged into the little churches, the saints, carried with them their imperfections, and at times their stains. A race when it embraces a worship that was not made for it, transforms it to meet the wants of its imperfection and its heart.

These attempts would have been produced by an extremely simple Christianity, a mere copy of the situation of Judaism, something that would have been ours to what Islam was to be and that, if it had succeeded, they would no doubt have found it had stalled the success of Mohammed among the Arabs and the Syrians. How much fancifulness might have been thus averted! Christianity is an edition of Judaism adapted to the Indian and European taste; Mohammedanism is an edition of Judaism adapted to the Arab taste. Mohammed did nothing, after all, but revert to the Jewish-Christianity of Zenoibis, by a reaction against the metaphysical polytheism of the Council of Nicea and the Councils that followed.

A more and more sharply accented sense

carried this dogma to the same exaggerated extreme as Islam, postulates revelation, that is, divine science, or one of those alleged facts which are not subject to scientific investigation. Between Christianity and science, therefore, war was inevitable; one of the two adversaries must succumb.

From the thirteenth century, the moment when, by reason of the study of the books of Aristotle and Averroes, the scientific spirit began to manifest itself in the countries, until the sixteenth century, the Church, by the strength of the State at its disposal, managed to crush its foe; but in the seventeenth century scientific discoveries are too reverberant to be hushed up. The Church is still strong enough to seriously trouble the life of Gallileo Galilei, Descartes, but not to hinder these discoveries and the growing laws of the intellect. In the eighteenth century, reason triumphs; about the year 1800, science, any educated man believes any longer the supernatural. The reactions that have

Among the most promising of mission centers abroad is South America. There are to be found in this continent some of the poorest and most ignorant of the human race. Buenos Ayres, and Rosario—the latter not more than 200 miles inland, while the one on the coast—is the largest city in the continent. Buenos Ayres, about 1835, in a small town, the English-speaking residents, and the American missionaries, who were sent in 1867 the services of several Spanish laborers, were able to carry the Gospel in the South American land. The few churches that were founded after other preaching places are occupied by the poor, who were the appropriation to do it during the last few years of the century, and it has proved a very successful mission.

It is now Bishop Wiley's supervisory and is divided into four districts, Yokohama, Santiago, Valparaiso, and Montevideo. They make very intelligent Christians, and are kind to the efforts which are made to do so. The missionaries were able to do so with extraordinary success. The missionaries gladly appropriated \$35,000 for the history of the mission in Mexico we have religious people and a large number of them are not very particular as to the

A dubious morality and a natural leaning toward idolatry, such were the sorry predispositions brought into the Church by the multitudes that were made to enter it a part of the time by force, from the end of the fourth century. Man changes not in a day, baptism has no miraculous instantaneous effects; these pagans, masses, who had scarcely gone through the form of conversion, remained just what they were before; in the East, bad, selfish, corrupt. In the West, gross and superstitious. As regards morals, indeed, the Church needed no aid to uphold its rules, almost all of which were already written in books accepted as canonical. As regards superstition, on the other hand, its task was far more delicate.

It has been, then, the fate of Christianity almost foun-
der in its hour of victory, like ship which should come near sinking by reason of the too ponderous gear heaped on board. Yet the fate of the religion followed a course so unlike human as Jesus, the un-
like great Jew that a Jew, man-
ples have made of him the most complete at-
titude to the Jew, namely, a man-God. The
superstitions laid on his work by superstitions
of the past and the people wholly man-
great prophet, and much the more
of Christianity seems to consist in the recog-
nition of the innateness left on it by our pre-
decessors, in order to reach the real Jesus.
But the gravest blunder that can be committed
in the study of history is to suppose, as be-
lieve that religions are the work of themselves, peo-
ple, and that they have no other value than
some religious value, and that they are

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